

## Dr. D. Cover Sheet

Michael Higley-Vance

October 10, 2013

EDU7002-8	Dr. Donna Rice
Educational Research Methodology	Assignment #8: Signature Assignment

**Assignment:** Using the feedback from your Mentor and the Abbreviated Concept Paper Template (located in the Resource Tab) as a guide, assemble the components of the topic paper. Many of those components have been developed during the Activities of this course. The one notable exception is the abridged literature review.

Use the guidance in the Concept Paper Best Practices Handbook and the Doctoral Candidate Resource Guide to develop the literature review. The annotated bibliography you have been developing during this course should provide the sources for the literature review.

Annotated Bibliography: Assemble the annotations you have been accumulating during this course. They should be presented in the same order as an APA reference list.

Reflective Look ED.D vs. Ph.D.: As you begin the dissertation part of your doctoral journey, it is a good time to reflect on the degree that matches your professional goals. Using “Difference Between the PhD and Applied Doctorates,” write a short reflective paper outlining your professional goals related to each degree type.”

Your final submission should include:

- Your Topic Paper following the guidelines in the NCU Topic Paper Template.
- Your Annotated Bibliography developed over the course.
- A 1-2 page (350 words per page) reflective paper on the relationship of your professional goals and your degree with 1-2 references.

### Faculty Use Only

Michael, I spent quite a bit of time on this final paper mainly because I think you have a very interesting topic and I want to see you do well.

Review the comments closely – especially those that have to do with the problem, purpose, and questions. Make sure they are in alignment. Develop a flow chart and put whatever your problem is in the first block, the purpose in the second, and the questions in the third so you can see the alignment. You have some work to do to establish a good foundation that you can continue to build upon – look for sources that back up the things you have observed personally and that will help the strength of your lit review.

My comments and insertions are just there for you to think about. Though you may interrogate the teachers' perceptions of the levels of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy through a survey, it appears you are looking for a relationship between student participation, perceived levels of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, and online course completion. The participation and completion you would get from records and the perceptions you would get through the survey (or better you could use a self-reporting instrument to measure the self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation). Stay away from cause and effect and do not consider mixed methods. Nothing in your problem or purpose mention a traditional program – do not try the comparison – stick to the problem and purpose.

Correct the Table of Contents (TOC) – see comment on how to below. Check formatting in your annotated bibliography and ensure it is consistent.

I enjoyed reading about your goals for your doctorate. When you become a principal call me and I will show you the middle school leadership program you need to incorporate in your school!

I wish you the best as you go forward – you have worked very hard in this class and are developing a good foundation to launch from.

**Dr. Donna Rice      90                              91                              10/14/13**

### Grading Key

10 Excellent    9 Above Average    8 Adequate    7 Needs Improvement    6 Not Acceptable  
25 Excellent    20 Above Average    15 Adequate    10 Needs Improvement    5 Not Acceptable

### Content 70%

| 8/10 Demonstrated a well-developed focus (Introduction) and listed major points to be covered (thorough points of development in a logical pattern using at least two levels of headings).

10 Achieved stated learning outcome(s) integrating key concepts and terms from course materials. Evaluated and applied concepts learned demonstrating learning through use of examples or illustrations. Included Annotated Bibliography (at least 15 sources) and 1 to 2 page Reflective paper on EdD vs PhD and Dissertation Goals with 1 - 2 references).

| 8/10 Integrated corrections to suggestions made throughout the course into the problem, purpose, and questions and they are in alignment. The problem statement is between 250 and 300 words, the purpose statement is a brief paragraph and both include the characteristics required in the original assignments (you do not need to use the comments feature of word here but do check the characteristics are present). **The questions are well written.** The paper ends with a conclusion that summarizes major points without adding new information and without repeating the introduction.

| 48/50 The Brief Review of the Literature

- uses at least four of the most important works from the annotated bibliography

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- presents a synthesis of the literature (it is not a series of mini-book reports presented sequentially but provides an integration of information by taking a group of studies and looking for areas of convergence and divergence) and providing a critical analysis.
- is comprehensive in that it ensures all pertinent topics are covered (the research question list, the concepts and/or variables, etc., and material no longer relevant is removed). It produces a new and integrative interpretation of findings that is more substantive than that found in the individual sources.
- is in the past tense, is organized and flows logically using headings and subheadings and primary works like Black or Vogt that were published in the last five years (secondary sources like Creswell and older sources are minimal). It indicates areas of incomplete knowledge and relates them to the envisioned study's problem, purpose, and research questions.
- includes at least one source that provides alternate or opposing perspectives on the proposed topic area to demonstrate unbiased research (finding differences of opinion between scholars is very valuable to your work so do not lose track of the sources where you discover them. Bring these scholarly tensions to light as you write your review so you can add depth to your literature review.
- does not emphasize the authors (e.g., "Smith noted" or "Smith and Jones found") and instead paraphrases ideas citing the authors parenthetically. Direct quotations are used very sparingly if at all to improve scholarly quality and originality. There is no more than one direct quotation for every ten pages of written material.
- includes a solid summary and appropriate citations. Contradictions and uncertainties that emerged from the review are highlighted and overarching themes run throughout.

| [6/10](#) Problem, Purpose, and Questions are aligned

10 Goals

| [90/100](#) Total

### **Writing 30%**

| [22/25](#) Appropriate and precise language

| [22/25](#) Proper use of APA

25 Clear divisions between the writer's voice and the sources used to support claims

| [22/25](#) Consistent use of standard American English in grammar and punctuation

| [91/100](#) Total

| The [Relationship of Participation, Student Motivation, and Self-Efficacy to Completion of an](#)  
Online Learning Program

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Concept Paper

Submitted to Northcentral University

Graduate Faculty of the School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by  
Michael Higley-Vance

Prescott Valley, Arizona  
October 2013

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**Comment [1]:** Ways to automatically format your TOC:

1. Use the built in MS Word automatic "Create a Table of Contents" feature. In MS Word help, type "Create TOC"

2. In the Dissertation Center, access the handout named, "Table of Contents"

3. Or the Internet:

a. <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/create-a-table-of-contents-or-update-a-table-of-contents-HP001225372.aspx>

b. <http://cybertext.wordpress.com/2010/07/23/word-2007-create-an-automatic-table-of-contents/http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/creating-a-table-of-contents-in-word-2007.html>

c. [http://www.techonthenet.com/word/table\\_of\\_contents/create2007.php](http://www.techonthenet.com/word/table_of_contents/create2007.php)

4. Youtube videos:

a. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T83vSprmMAw>.

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### Proposed Topic

The purpose of this paper is to propose a research topic of applied significance in adult online professional development training. This paper includes (a) an introduction of the context in which the research topic is embedded, (b) an abridged thematic literature review that presents the current themes, research, and identified issues in e-learning as it relates to the adult learner, (c) a problem statement that focuses on the specific problem to be addressed and why it is significant, (d) a purpose statement that identifies the proposed research methodology, (e) the questions that will be addressed in the research along with the corresponding hypotheses that will be tested, and (f) a summary of the proposal.

### **Introduction**

The specific problem is to investigate how intrinsic motivation and learner self-efficacy may contribute to the increase in online course participation and to corresponding successful course completion. These two learner characteristics remain the least researched learner characteristics of learners participating in online learning environments (Graf & Kinshuk, 2006; 2011; Tirrell & Quick, 2012; Huang, Lin, & Huang, 2012; Samruayruen, Enriquez, Natakutoong, & Samruayruen, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Between 1998-1999 online course enrollment was at 19,000 and 47% of those learners did not successfully complete the online course (Tirrell & Quick, 2012). Despite this difficulty, the national trend for enrollment in online courses has steadily grown with numbers reported in the fall of 2006 to be as high as 3.5 million (Tirrell & Quick, 2012) and in the fall of 2010 to be over 6.1 million (Allen & Seaman, 2011). However, the numbers of online students who successfully complete these courses continue to decrease along with the second lowest

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enrollment numbers since 2002 (Allen & Seaman, 2011). The specific problem is to investigate how student learning styles, behaviors, and learner characteristics may contribute to the increase in online course participation and to corresponding successful course completion. There are five learning characteristics students must develop in order to be successful in an online learning environment (Samruayruen, et al., 2013). The literature reviewed consistently supported intrinsic motivation? and self-efficacy as the two most relevant learning characteristics to the education process. However, a student's intrinsic motivation ultimately determines if he or she will be successful in any learning environment primarily an online only learning environment (Chen & Jang, 2010; Jin Nam, 2012). These two learner characteristics remain the least researched learner characteristics (Graf & Kinshuk, 2006; 2011; Tirrell & Quick, 2012; Huang, Lin, & Huang, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013) and an increased understanding in this area of need could help create more efficient online student learners, thereby increasing online course participation and successful course completion rates (McCarthy, M. 2010; Tirrell & Quick, 2012). The consequences if this study is not performed are that, nearly 30% of online students will continue to fail or drop out of their enrolled online course (Xu, Jaggars, & Columbia University, 2011).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed correlational study is to identify and compare how human behaviors, specifically student participation and teacher perceptions related to student intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy could contribute to the success rate of learners in a public K-12 online learning option program. The study will be located in middle Tennessee comparing students enrolled in the K-12 online learning program with students enrolled in a traditional classroom program environment. A group of approximately twenty-five online teachers and 25

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traditional classroom teachers from elementary, middle, and high school will be surveyed and compared using a survey protocol. This protocol will be used to gather information about learner motivation and self-efficacy related to the success rate of learners in a public K-12 online learning program.

### Research Questions

The research questions selected for this study are included to help identify and compare key human behaviors, specifically, intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy between learners in a public K-12 online learning option program and a traditional classroom environment that may affect the success rate of those learners completing an online program. Multiple methods of data collection and will be used to increase the validity of the research. Associated with the problem and purpose statements the following research questions will be addressed:

**Q1.** How does the level of student participation relate to completion of a public online learning program?

**Q2.** How do teachers' perceptions of the level of intrinsic motivation relate to completion of a public online learning program?

**Q3.** How do teachers' perceptions of the level of self-efficacy relate to completion of a public online learning program?

This question will be answered quantitatively using student work completion data to investigate significant effects of elementary, middle, and high school participation in a public online learning program as they relate to student intrinsic motivation and student self-efficacy.

**Q2.** How do teachers perceive the effect of self-efficacy on students' completion of a public online learning program compared to a traditional classroom environment?

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This question will be answered quantitatively with a web-based survey to investigate teacher perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school students' self-efficacy and how those perceptions affect student efficacy in completing an online learning program compared to those teacher perceptions of student efficacy affecting completion of a traditional classroom program.

**Q3.** How does student participation affect completion of a public online learning program?

This question will be answered qualitatively using student work completion data to investigate significant affects of elementary, middle, and high school participation in a public online learning program.

**Q4.** What strategies do K-12 learners use to motivate themselves in a public online learning environment?

This question will be answered using a qualitative approach to explore the strategies elementary, middle, and high school learners perceive motivate them to meet their established goals in a public online learning environment. An interview protocol designed to investigate if the students' strategies were perceived helpful to the learner, but also to explore if the students' strategies proved to impact a successful (or unsuccessful) completion of the public K-12 online learning program.

**Hypotheses**

By using web-based surveys, and completion reports, the hypotheses will be tested. Each question addresses a null hypothesis with no expectation of a significant relationship and an alternate hypothesis that proposes that a significant relationship does exist between intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy that affect the successful (or unsuccessful) completion rate of learners in a public K-12 online learning option program.

**H1<sub>0</sub>.** The level of learner participation does not correlate with completion of an online course.

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**H1<sub>a</sub>.** The level of learner participation does correlate with completion of an online course.

**H2<sub>0</sub>.** The level of student intrinsic motivation perceived by teachers does not relate to completion of a public online learning program.

**H2<sub>a</sub>.** The level of student intrinsic motivation perceived by teachers does relate to completion of a public online learning program.

**H3<sub>0</sub>.** The level of student self-efficacy perceived by teachers does not relate to completion of a public online learning program.

**H3<sub>a</sub>.** The level of student self-efficacy perceived by teachers does relate to completion of a public online learning program.

### **Brief Review of the Literature**

With the rapid growth of informational technologies and internet use, technology is vastly changing the way educational institutions view student learning (Huang, & Huang, 2012; Tirrell & Quick, 2012). There is a wealth of information available, in the field of e-learning research that is mainly focused on the learning environment, the implementation, and student acceptance of online programs (Huang & Huang, 2012; Tirrell & Quick, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013). The number of online programs available today continues to rise and so does the concern about student retention and successful completion rates of these programs (Tirrell & Quick, 2012). According to Huang and Huang (2012) a student's learning style can help predict how students will perform in an online course program. Research has been conducted identifying five learning styles, which might contribute to successful completion of an online learning program (Samruayruen, et al., 2013). Additionally Checkering and Gamson (1987) article entitled the *Seven principles of good instructional practice* focused on good teaching and

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learning. This article included seven principles, which might also help contribute to a students' successful completion of an online learning program.

### **Online Completion Rates**

Although there is an impressive growth in student online course enrollments, there is an alarming concern developing in the number of online students who do not successfully complete their online course programs (Allen & Seaman, 2011; Tirrell & Quick, 2012). Almost a quarter of students who enroll in an online program will either drop out, fail, or be administratively dropped by their instructors (Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Tirrell & Quick, 2012). Chief academic officers at Virginia Community College created a guiding framework in 2000 to address the quality of online course development rather than the particular issues related directly to student attrition rates (Tirrell & Quick, 2012). What the assessment process found a year later was that low student completion rates were not a result of poor course development but, instead, the lack of consideration for student learning styles and instructional best practices (Tirrell & Quick, 2012).

### **Learner Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**

Learner satisfaction in an online course program has a great deal to do with the student learning style and instructional practices presented and experienced by the student in an online learning environment (Graf & Kinshuk, 2006; Huang, & Huang, 2012; Tirrell & Quick, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013). Chyung and Vachon (2005) identified factors related to student dissatisfaction with online learning programs. They determined that factors contributing to both student satisfaction and dissatisfaction should be identified, and those that supported satisfaction should be studied further to determine a possible correlation between student satisfaction and student online completion rates. The most significant factors found contributing to learner

dissatisfaction in online course programs is a perceived lack in (a) the instructor's level of engagement, (b) the instructor's timely feedback, and (c) the instructor's clear expectations (Chyung & Vachon, 2005). Additionally, they suggested that these negative factors related to dissatisfaction of online course programs be reduced in an effort to increase student satisfaction.

### Learning Styles

A number of studies have been conducted to determine which of the five learning styles have the most affect on effective learning experiences and program success. These five learning styles included (a) intrinsic goal, (b) self-efficacy, (c) test anxiety, (d) cognitive strategy, and (e) study management. Two of these learning styles have been identified as the two least researched learning styles in the field of e-learning: intrinsic goal (or motivation) and student self-efficacy (Jin Nam, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013). Several more studies have been conducted to identify the most important learning behaviors related to these learning styles (Graf & Kinshuk, 2006; Huang, & Huang, 2012; Jin Nam, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013). Researchers in this field of study have constantly shown that the more engaged students are in an online program the greater their satisfaction and success is with the program (Huang, & Huang, 2012).

In many of these studies researchers considered that students learn in different ways when determining how learning styles might increase the learning process and help make learning easy for online students (Graf & Kinshuk, 2006). However, there has been little research conducted identifying possible correlations between student learning disabilities and the completion status of online course programs. This what? is partially due to the fact that students with learning disabilities often utilize technology, to synchronously assist, in their learning process and do not typically have the cognitive ability to participate successfully in an asynchronous learning experience (McBrien, Jones, & Rui, 2009). In this study McBrien, Jones,

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and Rui (2009) suggested that students with disabilities were far more likely to fail online course programs even with a heavy focus on the five learning styles, which included the two most important styles, intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy.

### Instructional Practices

Online instructional practices have been determined by researchers in the field of online learning to have some positive affect on student online learning experiences (Chyung and Vachon, 2005; Tirrell & Quick, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013). Tirrell and Quick (2012) reported on Checkering and Gamson's *Seven principles of good instructional practice*, an article, which focused on seven practices of good teaching and learning. These seven principles of good teaching practices included (a) encouraging contact between students, (2) developing reciprocity and cooperation between students, (3) encouraging active learning, (4) providing prompt feedback, (5) emphasizing time on task, (6) communicating to students high student performance expectations, and finally (7) respecting diverse student talents. Researchers had reported that when online instructors use the constructivist-based seven principles to guide their instruction student retention rates in those online courses went up (Checkering & Gamson, 1987; Graf & Kinshuk, 2006; Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Huang, & Huang, 2012; Tirrell & Quick, 2012; Samruayruen, et al., 2013).

### Summary

A research topic of applied significance in the field of online learning is proposed in this paper. The study will contribute to the literature specializing in the online educational field by expanding on the currently small empirical literature regarding student intrinsic motivation and student self-efficacy related to the successful (or unsuccessful) completion of an online program.

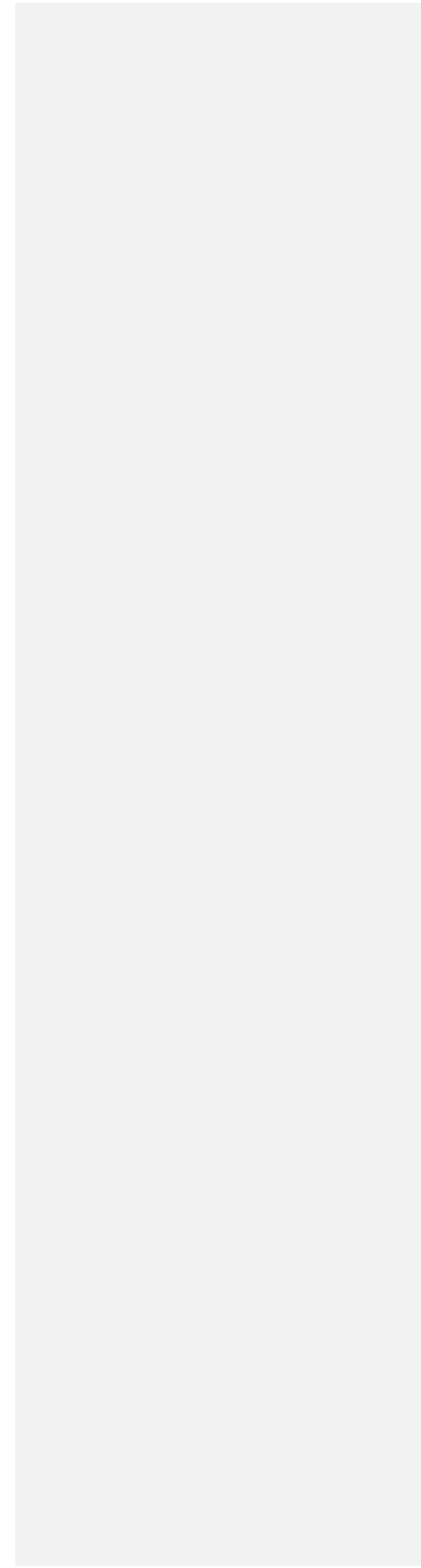
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The results could add a better understanding of student behaviors in which a student must poses to participate and successfully complete a K-12 public online learning program.



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## References

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## Appendix A

### Annotated Bibliography

Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2011). *Going the distance: Online Education in the United States, 2011*. Needham, MA: Sloan Consortium, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/goingthedistance.pdf>

The purpose of this report was to determine the state of online learning in higher education within the United States of America. The survey created to conduct this study was designed, administered, and analyzed by the Babson Survey Research Group and data was collected in partnership with the College Board. The 2011 report was aimed at answering questions about the foundation and scope of learning online. More than 2,500 colleges and universities were surveyed addressing these main questions: (a) is online learning strategic, (b) how many students are learning online, (c) are learning outcomes in online learning comparable to learning in the classroom, (d) has faculty acceptance of online learning increased, (e) what training do faculty members receive for teaching online, and (f) what is the future of online enrollment growth? The sample for this analysis was composed from degree-granting educational institutions representing higher education in the United States open to the public. The samples of respondents were received and a total 55.8 percent of the total respondents from 2003 through 2010 were merged for investigation of changes over time. Researchers found, from this study, that compared to student enrollment in 2006 there was an increase of 9.7 percent over the previous four years. At this rate student enrollment will grow by 21.5 percent as the demand for online learning continues to increase, according to the study. Evidence that not all educational institutions view online learning in the same way and believe it to be a critical step towards educational reform was found with only 27 percent of faculty

reporting that they valued online learning. This report examines the importance of online learning and its consistent growth and demand within higher education institutions.

Chen, L.-C., & Lien, Y.-H. (2011). Using author co-citation analysis to examine the intellectual structure of e-learning: A MIS perspective. *Scientometrics*, 89(1), pp. 867-886. doi:10.1007/s11192-011-0458-y

The authors in this article argue there is little knowledge on e-learning within non-educational fields of study. Additionally, the authors incorporated into their study author co-citation analysis (ACA) in order to identify structures of knowledge through the relationships of two similar authors regarding e-learning practices. The data was collected from 1996 to 2009. Researchers utilized bibliographic elements as conceptual units and by doing this ACA helped researchers analyze discipline structure and reduce personal bias within their results. ACA is based on tracking the number of times that two authors or documents are cited together, assuming the more times two authors are cited together, the closer the relationship is between the two. The authors identified the steps of conducting the study as (a) identify authors highly cited by research articles, (b) retrieve co-citation counts for each pair of authors, (c) compile a matrix of raw co-citations, (d) perform clustering through various analytical methods, and (e) interpret the results. The authors in this study determined six similarities and four differences between MIS focused e-learning from an educational perspective by following this methodology. The authors call for further research in theoretical and practical discussions of e-learning and its structural breakdown.

Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 30(7), pp. 3-7. Retrieved from <http://wwwtemp.lonestar.edu/multimedia/SevenPrinciples.pdf>

The purpose of this article was to examine the literature addressing student success in online courses using the *Seven principles of good practice* by Chickering and Gamson (1987). The study focused largely on whether instructional strategies related to the seven principles had an effect on online student attrition rates. Faculty from three different community colleges who taught online courses within the last three semesters of this study completed a survey to determine the relationship between each of the seven principles of good online instruction and student attrition in online classes. The survey results were compared to student completion rates in their online courses and the results indicated that no relation existed between what faculty reported to use as instructional strategies and student successful completion of the online course. However, a moderate relationship was found with one of the seven principles, teacher engagement, indicating that faculty who engaged with their students online found some success in reducing student failures.

Chyung, S. Y., & Vachon, M. (2005). An investigation of the profiles of satisfying and dissatisfying factors in e-learning. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 18(2), pp. 97-113. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/docview/218512744?accountid=28180>

The purpose of this study was to conduct a theory-based investigation created to detail student profiles of satisfying and dissatisfying factors in online learning programs. The theoretical framework chosen was based on Edward Lee Thorndike's law of effect that said that animals will form a bond with something based on consequences, if the behavior expressed is satisfying then the bond is strengthened. Conversely, while a behavior might be annoying the bond tends to be weakened. Another measure of the author's theoretical framework was

Frederick Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, which stated that certain factors contribute to student satisfaction, and other hygiene factors may contribute to online dissatisfaction. The author's performed a content analysis study aimed at building theory and guidelines from course evaluation data of 17 online learning courses. After data analysis of qualitative input, 19 categories were originated. These categories were prioritized based on student emphasis on whether the category was a satisfying factor, or a dissatisfying factor. The most frequent satisfying factors were student learning oriented. The most frequent dissatisfying factors were impending assignment deadlines, lack of instructor engagement, and poor student goal setting. This study highlights the importance of course evaluation and the impact attention to these results has on student satisfying factors in an online course program.

Ellis, T. J., & Levy, Y. (2011). Framework of problem-based research: A guide for novice researchers on the development of a research-worthy problem. *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, 11(1), pp. 17-33. Retrieved from <http://inform.nu/Articles/Vol11/ISJv11p017-033Ellis486.pdf>

In this study the authors address the question of identifying and establishing the research-worthiness of a problem, by focusing on five aspects of the research process: (1) the need and importance to base the research on a well-define problem, (2) what constitutes a research worthy problem, (3) demonstrating effective problem statements, (4) how to locate problems that are research worthy, and (5) how to write a summary and provide recommendations as a result of the research findings. The authors demonstrated in this study, by using the literature that the problem statement is the capstone of any quality research problem and serves as the starting point for the research endeavor. During the research the authors pointed out that while the research problem is the starting point it is the literature review that serves as the foundation for the research. Regarding research problems the authors suggested three qualifications to a worthy research problem: (1) the

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problem is relevant and active, (2) the problem is impactful and suggests a worthy contribution to the current empirical research, and (3) the current solutions are inadequate to support the hypothesis or is merely nonexistent. The authors identified six means of developing new knowledge. The authors stated that worthiness of the research is built on the extensive understanding of the literature related to the field or topic. An exhaustive understanding of the body of knowledge related to the field or topic and encompasses an expansion on the current field of knowledge. The authors defined the problem statement as the argumentation of the problem's viability and offered a template that while simple is far from easy to write. The template presented in the study provided an overview of how the six questions of what, how, where, when, why, and who, should be focused. The authors propose that novice researchers can locate research-worthy problems by using four steps: look, read, synthesize, and consult. The problem statement template is not prescriptive but it does propose a means of concisely identifying the questions that need to be answered and support that is needed for the various parts of a problem statement.

Ferguson, J. M., & DeFelice, A. E. (2010). Length of online course and student satisfaction, perceived learning, and academic performance. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 11(2), pp. 73-84. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=15&hid=111&sid=9ccfc92c-7f56-4c4b-a8b3-596bcb04beb4%40sessionmgr113>

The authors in this literature review presented an exceptional assessment regarding the factors effecting satisfaction with courses taught online concluding student connectedness to the course, either by participating collaboratively with other students or by interacting with the instructor, will likely impact student satisfaction the most. Equivalency theory, introduced by Simonson, Schollosser, & Hanson was used as the theoretical framework of this study to determine if there were any differences between online student satisfaction,

perceived student learning, and performance when the independent variable was length of the course. The study conducted utilized a five-week course versus a fifteen-week course, while all other pedagogical factors were kept the same. Equivalency theory was supported in this study because students in both groups were given the same learning material in both online courses. 75 graduate students took part in part one of the study which consisted of a 15-question Likert scale survey, while 114 graduate students' final grades from the same four courses were analyzed for the second part of the study.

Evidence from the study showed that students were significantly more satisfied with the interaction between the instructor and student in the longer course while students were significantly more satisfied with less interaction among shorter online course programs. No significant difference was found for perceived learning, or satisfaction regarding taking additional online classes. However, students in the shorter courses showed significantly stronger academic performance than students in the full online semester courses. Improvements to the pedagogy of the class were identified for both formats. In regard to the shorter course, a shift needs to be made to encourage and emphasize interaction between the online instructor and student. Several possibilities were proposed in the study focusing on students enrolled in the shorter online courses and may have proved different from those students enrolled in the longer online courses.

Graf, S., & Kinshuk, K. (2006, December). Considering learning styles in learning management systems: Investigating the behavior of students in an online course. *Semantic Media Adaptation and Personalization*, pp. 25-30. Retrieved from [http://wit.at/people/graf/publications/graf\\_kinshuk\\_SMAP06.pdf](http://wit.at/people/graf/publications/graf_kinshuk_SMAP06.pdf)

Learning management systems (LMS) have proven very successful in the field of online learning education. However, there is a gap in online course development, which excludes any attention to individual student learning styles. The purpose of this paper

was to identify specific learning styles related to LMS and the successful completion of online courses. The authors indicated in the research that student learning styles within the LMS framework was the main focus of the study, in order to do this consideration to student behaviors while enrolled in an online course program should also be investigated. In this paper, the authors analyzed the behavior of 43 students based on predetermined learning styles and foreseen patterns of human behavior. The stated problem indicated that when learning styles in an educational environment, classroom or online, are not considered in the development of LMS low student completion rates increase. The performed study aimed to address two issues: firstly to determine whether students with diverse learning styles act differently in online courses and which learning styles prove to be more helpful to poses for students in an online learning program, and secondly to investigate the relationship between the learning style preferences and student behaviors during online course participation. Researchers found that there were several patterns of student behaviors significantly correlated to online learning styles and the successful completion (or non completion) of online learning programs. The authors suggested that future studies be conducted to gather more information about the correlations of learning styles and behavior. It is also noted that this information can be used to determine the best approach in identifying specific learning styles of students in LMS.

Hale, J. (2011 April 17). Understanding research methodology 3: Goals of scientific research. Online blog, *World of Psychology*. Retrieved from <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2011/04/17/understanding-research-methodology-3-goals-of-scientific-research/>

In this article the author discussed and answered questions about understanding research methodology and the goals related directly to the research. The author points out three important factors to goals of scientific research. The first point is a well-written

description of the problem, the second is a prediction of the problem or hypothesis, and finally a well developed explanation of the research findings. Describing refers to the explicit procedures used to define, classify, and categorize the relationships of subjects or topics being studied. The author established in the article that gathering information on a large population allows the researcher more information and data to describe the study and its finding in very clear terms. Alternatively, a well-written description of the research helps describe a single phenomenon or observation. In addition to developing a research description researchers must make predictions or hypotheses are often created from analyzing theories or concepts and is a significant part of developing research goals. Finally, the author argued that the most important goal of scientific research is describing the data. According to the author determining cause and effect and eliminating plausible alternatives achieve this main goal but is the most difficult condition to meet.

Huang, E. Y., Lin, S. W., & Huang, T. K. (2012). What type of learning style leads to online participation in the mixed-mode e-learning environment? A study of software usage instruction. *Computers & Education*, 58(1), pp. 338-349.  
doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2011.08.003

In this study the authors extended previous research by testing a model that examined the mediating process of prior knowledge in the relationship between learning style and e-learning performance. They hypothesized that learning style is positively related to online participation that online participation is positively related to e-learning performance, and the greater the prior knowledge, the stronger the relationship between online participation and learning performance. This study measured the learning style of 219 college students in a single course by measuring (a) student learning style using the ILS, (b) student online participation, (c) student performance, (d) prior knowledge of the tool used in the course, and (e) the control variables of gender, computer experience, and

internet experience. Support was found that online participation is a mediating construct between learning style and performance; further the study found that sensory learning styles individuals tend to participate only more frequently and for a longer duration; while prior knowledge was shown to moderate the relationship between participation and learning performance only in terms of passive participation. Several recommendations were made by the authors that included: an acknowledgement that it is difficult to determine the degree of influence of interceding theories in educational institutions that desire to increase student online participation, that most learners appeared to immediately benefit from online learning experiences, and the authors also commented on several suggestions for further research study. The authors identified three gaps in the field of study: (1) the model needs to be tested in different subject contexts, (2) additional mediating processes that link learning styles and learning performance should be explored, and (3) a more mature, professional, and autonomous set of online students should be enlisted.

Irvin, M. J., Hannum, W. H., de la Varre, C., & Farmer, T. W. (2010). Barriers to distance education in rural schools. *Quarterly Review Of Distance Education*, 11(2), pp. 73-90. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=53953959&site=eds-live>

The purpose of this study was to examine barriers of using distance education in rural schools. A national survey of 417 randomly selected, low-income, rural school systems in the United States was conducted and guided by these specific aims: the relationship between districts, the association between districts and course offerings, the relationship between delivery formats, and to examine the relationship between course completion and students' satisfaction with distance learning, and any barriers to overcome. The

study used a telephone survey entitled the Rural Distance Education Survey (RDES). The rural school districts that were randomly selected qualified for the 2004-2005 Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP). These school districts typically have fewer than 600 students and a county with fewer than 10 people per square mile. The survey was developed by research staff to measure several types of barriers related to online learning in rural school districts and was administered by trained interviewers (pp. 77-78). The survey questions asked school administrators or other qualified staff to identify barriers to online learning to which their district had experienced. The frequency of barriers encompasses thirteen ranked barriers from four separate categories. 67.7% of respondents indicated that the primary barrier was a lack of curriculum requirements using online learning methods. 63.7% of respondents indicated that there was a lack of funding by the school district to support distance learning. And finally, the least number of respondents, at 7.4%, indicated that an insufficient connectivity was the least barrier experienced. In addition, rural schools often face shortages of teachers, especially in high-level courses such as chemistry, physics, calculus, etc. For the most part, rural schools may only have a small percentage of their student body interested in taking such courses, so hiring a full-time teacher in many cases is not financially feasible. Online learning can alleviate this problem. Research to date has shown students who learn through technology, including distance education; typically have learning outcomes at least as good as students who learn through face-to-face instruction. Subsequent research may focus on determining the impact of distance education on a broader range of students including minority groups and specific personnel. Another aspect may be to study ways to prepare students to be better prepared online learners. The results from this study

support conclusions from other studies however, ongoing studies should be conducted with various measurement tools to help determine the benefit and considerable promise distance education may continue to provide.

Jin Nam, C. (2012). Context and creativity: The theory of planned behavior as an alternative mechanism. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 40(4), pp. 681-692. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=75245514&site=eds-live>

Creativity researchers identified intrinsic motivation as the most important prevailing process that describes the effects of contextual characteristics on individual creativity. In this study the authors attempted to explain the mechanisms through which the identifiable variables influenced the creativity of scholars. The literature reviewed drew on studies that used cognitive evaluation theories, which scholars have argued determine an individual's level of intrinsic motivation. The reviewed literature also indicated that scholars believed that intrinsic motivation is the antecedent of creativity. The purpose of this paper was to expand on the organizational creativity literature by developing and validating alternative processes on the basis of planned behavior theory (PBT). The author expected that creativity would be predicted by both student intentions and student perceived behavioral control related to creative performance or self-efficacy. The method used was an intervening process between context and creativity. This method tested longitudinal data collected from undergraduate management students and their instructors at the North American business school. The online course included 14 sections taught by 28 instructors with approximately 30 students. Data was collected at three different times during the course of the program with 386 students responding out of 430 students enrolled. This sample included a breakdown of gender and age

distributions. The questionnaires developed concentrated on three intervening components base on the TPB using a 7-point Likert scale to collect student responses. The study found that intrinsic motivation offered an alternative intervening process to that presented originally in the literature currently available. Using the present findings of the study, the authors suggested that two TPB predictors significantly related to creativity, peer support and creative self-efficacy. The author notes that the present data collected and information shared should be interpreted with caution considering the limitations of the study. The research design involved in the study was valid and performed with fidelity however; it was composed of undergraduate management students, which according to the author raises concerns about the validity and accuracy of the data collected. In addition the TPB components used in the study were constructed using previous measures developed to explain other types of human behavior.

Jones-White, D. R., Radcliffe, P. M., Huesman Jr., R. L. & Kellogg, J. P. (2010). Redefining student success: Applying different multinomial regression techniques for the study of student graduation across institutions of higher education. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(2), pp. 154-174. doi: 10.1007/s1116-009-91449-4

Jones-White et al. focus their article on the polychotomous definition of student success with more sophisticated methods of modeling. They do this by “comparing multinomial regression techniques to assess their utility in modeling multi-institutional student success” (p. 154). The authors use matriculated data to define “student success” and outcomes. Additionally, the authors suggest that student success should include those who transfer and obtain degrees from other colleges, as well as students who transfer but do not graduate. Once an understanding of the types of successes had been defined, Jones-White et al. identified probable outcomes for that success. The authors used a “statistically rigorous approach” to studying three years of matriculating freshman at the

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities with data from the university's student records and the National Student Clearinghouse's StudentTracker service (p. 156). The authors were able to define the variables that most often impacted student success by creating a probability equation, which helped calculate the data. The focus of this article has raised discussion among educational institutions by its development of an equation for determining student success. Although this research was confined to the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, the variables used can be applied to other educational institutions. Jones-White et al. findings suggested that colleges refine how student success is defined. Currently the emphasis is placed on graduation rates from matriculated data but with an increasingly transient student population enrolling in other schools and dropping out of college, the traditional definition of student success is no longer applicable.

McBrien, J., Jones, P., & Rui, C. (2009). Virtual Spaces: Employing a Synchronous Online Classroom to Facilitate Student Engagement in Online Learning. *International Review Of Research In Open & Distance Learning*, 10(3), pp. 1-17. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=48657070&site=eds-live>

This research study aimed to identify effective online learning environments using transactional distance theory while operating using a theoretical framework to explore the role of online learning spaces and assisted technologies utilized by special education students. The authors of the article discussed themes, which contribute to reducing the barriers of online learning students experience and spoke to the importance of developing quality online learning environments in distance education for students with learning disabilities in higher education. Many universities and colleges in the United States offer online degree programs, which give students from around the world the opportunity to

participate in higher education programs from the comfort of their homes. This is especially important for those students with disabilities that prevent them from extensive mobility. The authors of the study asked two main questions of their participants with varying degrees of the questions asked. The first main question asked if synchronous online environments increased student perception of social interaction and did this opportunity increase their desire to participate in an online learning program. The second question asked for participants to identify specific strengths and weaknesses of the current availability of synchronous online learning environments. Participants in the project study were enrolled in three undergraduate and three graduate online courses in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. The method used for sampling was opportunistic and required students to have a disability to participate and invited them to participate in the evaluation of the course without mandating its requirement. Sixty-two surveys were returned out of the 90 that were distributed showing a 69 percent return rate. Students' comments on the surveys appeared to suggest that comfort and student engagement were the most important with only 9 percent indicating a negative affect from student social interactions. The majority of the comments were positive and suggested that insufficient social interaction in online learning programs, in regards to special education students, might attribute to an decrease in student completion and online enrollment in distance education.

McCarthy, M. (2010). Experiential learning theory: From theory to practice. *Journal of business*

*and Economics Research*, 8(5), pp. 131-139. Retrieved from <http://online.dimitra.gr/sektrainers/file.php/1/MartinDougiamas.pdf>

The authors summarize the interpretive data in this paper to understand and represent the learning experiences of students participating in a Moodle course. The author of his paper discussed a postgraduate online course called “Constructivism” held at Curtin University of Technology, for teachers engaged in professional development through distance learning. The defined goals of this course included learning about constructivism, self-reflection of their own learning, and learning collaboratively. The course was developed using an online open source web program called a Moodle, developed by one of the authors. The intended goals of this study were to improve the quality of the postgraduate course and improve the ability of Moodle as a tool to create effective online courses. This particular study outlined in this paper is part of an ongoing research program. The authors’ key question addressed in this paper is: How can internet applications successfully support constructionist epistemologies of quality teaching and effective learning. The research study employed an interpretive research methodology with elements of participatory action research, virtual ethnography, and internet application design. The total number of students who participated in the Moodle is not known however; the authors indicated that eight students consented to the research study. The Moodle course was developed to last over a 14-week period. The authors reported that besides the survey data collected, 150,000 words were typed and close to 20,000 log entries were recorded demonstrating an action taken by each of the eight participants. At the conclusion of the Moodle course the authors indicated that the student evidence collected suggested the online course was successful in achieving the three learning goals originally set. This study highlights the work conducted by two researchers in their effort

to explore, develop, and improve online learning communities and learning environments.

Patterson, B., & McFadden, C. (2009). Attrition in online and campus degree programs. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 12(2). Retrieved from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer122/patterson112.html>

The purpose of this study was to examine how the mode of instructional delivery, traditional or online, affected attrition rates of students' academic characteristics. Authors, Patterson and McFadden conducted a quantitative study, which analyzed the academic characteristics of students seeking a master's degree in Business Administration or Communications Sciences and Disorders. The study was conducted between 2002 and 2004 at a national research university in southeastern United States. Academic variables of the study explored were program implementation, undergraduate grade point average, graduate grade point average, admission test scores, and number of online courses completed successfully. The increased growth of informational technologies and e-learning has been met with questions of quality of online learning environments and instruction. The authors indicated that the study showed evidence that high attrition rates for online courses were often higher than for traditional classroom courses. Additionally, the authors noted that it was observed that non-traditional students were reported to have lower retention rates in online courses than traditional aged students and conversely traditional aged students showed a lower retention rate in traditional classroom environments over non-traditional students who showed evidence of having more success in a traditional classroom. In the study, the dichotomous criterion variable was student persistence and the predictor variable was the student's age. At the conclusion of the study Patterson and McFadden suggested that there was a much higher

attrition rate among students enrolled in the online master's degree program than students enrolled in the comparable classroom based format. The authors conducted a logistics regression analyses that showed student's age and method of online delivery were variables, which significantly had an effect on students' ability to successfully complete the online program. The findings in the study should be interpreted with caution and are limited by several factors: (a) the study population is limited to graduate students enrolled in a specific degree program, (b) the students in the study were self-selected, (c) participants in the study were pre-selected, and (d) the interpretation of the data collected is limited to census data. Additionally, the authors concluded from the findings seemed to indicate that pre academic performance may have a greater influence on the persistence of students enrolled in and who successfully complete online course programs.

Samruayruen, B., Enriquez, J., Natakatoong, O., & Samruayruen, K. (2013). Self-regulated learning: A key of a successful learner in online learning environments in Thailand. *Journal Of Educational Computing Research*, 48(1), pp. 45-69. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1000633&site=eds-live>

The purpose of this paper was to identify five effective self-regulated learning (SRL) characteristics. Eighty-eight Thai learners participated in the study by completing a developed SRL survey, which was adapted from a MSL questionnaire. The authors reported that there were a number of different theoretical views of self-regulated learning that might help describe the ideas and constructs of online learning environments. This study was focused using Zimmerman's Cyclic Phase Model and Pintrich's Conceptual Framework for SRL. Zimmerman's self-regulated learning model consists of three main factors: the person themselves, their behavior, and their environment. These factors are

shown in the study to interact with each other in a cyclical way. Pintrich's Conceptual Framework for SRL consisted of four unique phases: (1) planning and goal setting, (2) monitoring, (3) effort to control and self-regulate, and (4) reaction and reflection. Each phase focused on an important aspect of online learning and academic achievement. In this study, the research participants were taken from current Thai undergraduate and graduate students over the age of 18 years. These eighty-eight participants were enrolled in online courses and blended e-learning offerings. An online web survey system called "Kwik Surveys," was used to collect information about student behaviors in online learning environments. The authors report that the survey was conducted over a 4-week period and received 100 percent participation from the sample group. This group consisted of 35 percent doctoral students, 32 percent master, 26 percent certification, and 7 percent students enrolled in undergraduate studies. Among this group of Thai students there were 48 males students and 40 female students each participating in an online course program. The findings reported by the authors indicated that there was an overall correlation between student motivation and self-regulated strategies, which helped determine successful online learning and course completion. The authors note that the evidence from this study supported Pintrich's findings that motivational components were linked to student engagement and that intrinsic value was strongly related to strategies of self-regulation in on online course programs. This article cautions against the data collected related to test anxiety as the author points out that several questions associated with test anxiety were in fact not directly related to test anxiety.

Téllez, K. (2011). A case study of a career in education that began with "Teach for America". *Teaching Education*, 22(1), pp. 15-38. doi: 10.1080/10476210.2010.541238

Kip Téllez explores the life of a teacher named “Steven”, describing his educational and professional journey during and after his participation in the controversial Teach for America (TFA) program. Téllez conducted his case study beginning in 1999 and spanning through 2006. During this time, the author’s focus began with the intent to find out if pre-service (student) teaching is necessary and its effectiveness to teacher and student success in the classroom. The author defines his research approach as a “biographical study” using an “inductive case-study approach” (p. 16). “Steven” started teaching mathematics with no formal education and credited his perceived success to teaching from the text, taking instruction out of the classroom, and simply going above the standard. Téllez records the reasons leading up to “Steven’s” TFA placement in a math classroom, his success, and the fact that he had little teaching experience. Later “Steven” moves to a social studies class with English Language Learners (ELL), which provided many new challenges and required formal education “Steven” thought would be beneficial to his own success. Finally, the author examines “Steven’s” efforts to embed himself into the ELL culture. At the end of the case study “Steven” had become an administrator, indicating his perceived success in education. Téllez notes that “Steven’s” success could be, in part, due to teaching in lower income communities. “In wealthier communities, parents demand that their child’s teachers have both experience and expertise, thus making it unlikely that many non-credentialed teachers would be hired”, Téllez states (p. 34). The author adds “Steven” is a good example of someone who is successful at teaching without formal training however; he stresses the need for more research to look at the necessity and efficiency of pre-service programs like TFA. Téllez goes beyond addressing the effectiveness of the TFA program to argue that a teacher’s

formal education does not always determine their success in the classroom. The research conducted in this study proves that a teacher with no formal education can achieve long-term success in education.

Xu, D., Jaggars, S., & Columbia University, C. (2011). Online and Hybrid Course Enrollment and Performance in Washington State Community and Technical Colleges. CCRC Working Paper No. 31. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/online-hybrid-performance-washington.pdf>

This study was created to investigate the enrollment patterns and academic outcomes among online only, blended, and traditional course programs. The study was conducted in Washington State using 34 community and technical colleges between 2004 and 2009. The study analyses were performed on a student population of 51,017 degree-seeking students. At the time of this study an online course was defined as 51 percent or more of the instruction and interaction was online. Students from these educational institutions were tracked for five years collecting data similar to findings found in a study conducted in Virginia. The authors of this study set out to address the “no significant difference” phenomenon found in Russell’s (2011) study, which compared traditional classroom and distance education course work. Overall the findings suggested that students who took a course online had withdrawal or failure rates that were 10 to 15 percent higher than students who took the course in a traditional classroom setting. A few factors that the authors contributed to a dissatisfaction of online courses were complications with technology, a student’s sense of isolation, a relative lack of structure, and lack of teacher support, which may contribute to low completion rates. The findings suggested that the freedom from the constraints of a traditional classroom environment allows educational institutions to create as many online courses needed to meet the growing demand of

higher education enrollments. However, in this study the authors depicted the data, which indicated that between the Fall of 2004 and 2009 students who received traditional classroom instruction were more successful at completing courses than those students participating in online courses. The authors indicated that more research is needed to determine specific online learning behaviors and styles that might help close the gaps currently found in the research field.

### **My Degree Goals**

In high school I thought I wanted to do something with technology and business and never dreamed that I would ever go to a 4-year university. I'm the oldest of five and in my family I had to fight for everything and had very little. My mom always told me that if I wanted to go to college I had to work hard because school was expensive and the family was in no financial position to help. Some might hear those words and think, harsh, but those words were true and I always appreciated transparency because I knew what I could expect. At sixteen years old who wants to work hard just to go back to school after high school, not me. So, I never thought I would ever receive a Bachelor's, Master's, or much less be working on a earning my Ed.D.

In college my interests turned to educational leadership and administration. However, in order to be a principal you have to be good teacher and leader before taking a position of such responsibility and accountability as a principal. I am now an assistant principal of a middle school located in Clarksville, TN and have been for four years. Before becoming a principal I taught for 8 years and was a technology coach for the school system responsible for coaching middle school teachers, across the district, in technology integration and teaching. These experiences have helped me narrow my future career goals to be an online educational director of a public K-12 online school program.

In order to fulfill my future professional goal of becoming an online educational director I need to have more intense education and training in this related field of study. I believe a doctoral program will provide me with the additional knowledge and higher educational experience I need to successfully reach my professional goal. According to Nelson and Coorough (1994) there is very little difference between the PhD and EdD dissertation programs.

The authors add that the EdD program has been widely sought out by professionals in education because the nature of the research method is aimed at, and best suited for, the educational practitioner (Nelson & Coorough, 1994). Given this information, I decided the best scenario for me and my family would be to enroll in an online doctoral program that would not only meet the requirements for receiving a doctorate, but would also bring me to the attention of my school system. I have not had any experiences in participating in research opportunities and do not see this in my future. However, I do plan on applying the knowledge and skills learned to actual practice; for that reason receiving a PhD (Barratt, 2011) does not apply. Additionally I do not plan on using my degree to teach therefore, acquiring a PhD at this point seems an unreasonable choice given the EdD option. Because of the points I have discussed in this reflective paper I have begun my journey for an applied doctorate in online education. I am more interested in applied research as it suits my specific field and future professional goal interests.

## References

- Barratt, B. B. (2011). *Differences between PhD and applied degree*. Unpublished manuscript. [Northcentral University Dissertation Handbook, Appendix A].
- Nelson, J. K., & Coorough, C. (1994). Content analysis of the PhD versus EdD dissertation. *Journal Of Experimental Education*, 62(2), p. 158. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=9612041572&site=eds-live>